

Highly Qualified Paraeducator Requirements Under NCLB

The highly qualified paraeducator requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) call for paraeducator (paraprofessional) competencies for paraeducators whose work is supported by Title I funds. Title I funded paraeducators include those who work in “targeted” assistance programs or any instructional paraeducator who works in a school building that has a school wide Title I program.

The following guidance on meeting NCLB paraeducator standards was developed by the Iowa Department of Education for Iowa schools and area education agencies.

Definition of paraprofessional

For the purposes of Title I, Part A, a paraprofessional is an employee who provides instructional support in a program supported with Title I, Part A funds.

This includes paraprofessionals who (1) provide one-to-one tutoring if such tutoring is scheduled at a time when a student would not otherwise receive instruction from a teacher, (2) assist with classroom management, such as organizing instructional and other materials, (3) provide instructional assistance in a computer laboratory, (4) conduct parental involvement activities, (5) provide support in a library or media center, (6) act as a translator, or (7) provide instructional support services under the direct supervision of a teacher [Title I, section 1119(g)(2)].

Individuals who work in food services, cafeteria or playground supervision, personal care services, non-instructional computer assistance, and similar positions are not considered paraprofessionals under Title I.

Requirements

Title I paraprofessionals whose duties include instructional support and who were hired after January 8, 2002, must have (1) completed two years of study at an institution of higher education; or (2) obtained an associate’s (or higher) degree; or (3) met a rigorous standard of quality and be able to demonstrate, through a formal state or local academic assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics (or, as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness); or (4) obtain voluntary certification through the Board of Educational Examiners.

All Title I paraprofessionals must have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent. This includes paraprofessionals who serve as translators or who conduct parental involvement activities.

Paraprofessional Assessment

LEAs should carefully choose an assessment that will measure the knowledge of and ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics (or as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness). The criterion established for approval as a paraprofessional under No Child Left Behind Act must be rigorous and defensible. Examples of measures available to LEAs include Work Keys (which has been normed for paraprofessionals), Parapro Assessment from ETS, and COMPASS from ACT. The assessment chosen must ensure that more than just basic skills are being assessed.

Recommendation

All LEAs should encourage their paraeducators to acquire Iowa’s voluntary paraeducator certification offered through the Board of Educational Examiners, even those who have already been approved using an assessment. Federal funds, including Title I funds, can be used to assist paraeducators to complete this coursework.